



THE NATIONAL PREACHER, And Village Pulpit.

Vol. III.—New Series.] NOVEMBER, 1860. [No. 11.—Whole No. 731.

SERMON XXIX.

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THE MANIFESTATION OF LOVE.*

PREACHED ON MOUNT ZION, IN JERUSALEM.

"HEREIN is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—1 JOHN 4: 10.

AMID the various pursuits and struggles of the life of man, there is nothing which commands so constant and so wide-spread regard as the exhibition of a sincere love. Men respect power, they are enthralled by beauty, they are impressed by knowledge; but above all, are they won by love.

I might direct your attention to such traits of character as were involved in the tact and energy and enterprise of a Rothschild, or the subtlety and culture and refinement of a Talleyrand, or the penetration, breadth, and intellectual fullness of a Shakspeare, or the intensity and resolution of a Napoleon, and you could not but

* See editor's note at the end of this discourse.

survey these qualities with admiration or perhaps with awe; but for all that, your heart would not be satisfied in such fellowship and communion. It is the memory and merit of those real friends of man, who have loved their race and suffered for its good, that the heart hallows far beyond that of the great names of earth, who have lived for personal and selfish ends alone.

And in the range of common life, it is to this exhibition of character that the eye is most readily attracted. Let the announcement, "Herein is love," be made concerning any of the simplest scenes of life, whether it be the outgushing of a parent's heart over the errors of a wayward son, or the devotion of a child to a parent's want, or the quick sympathy of a friend, with a companion's fear and sorrow, or the self-denial of one whose soul turns tenderly towards all bruised and troubled hearts—and how universal is the interest in such a revelation of a grace so fervent and unselfish!

But in all the exhibitions of this spirit, which attract us in the characters of our fellow-men, there is felt to be a limitation and an imperfection which hinders the fullness of our satisfaction in regarding them.

This regret for the inequality or disproportion or brevity or narrowness of these displays of earthly love, thus inspires a spiritual longing for the exhibition of a love on which the mind can meditate without the thought of imperfection, and on which the heart can rest without the fear of change. There is an instinct in the soul which ever craves this satisfaction. The repose which follows the contemplation of a *perfect love*, and a conscious interest in it, is, I conceive, the veritable end intended by all the fears and strivings of the soul. The human heart *rests* only in the embraces of an infinite affection.

The words of the Apostle, in the text, relate to a subject which contains within itself this fullness and perfection to which our natures thus aspire.

With his thought turned from all earthly exhibitions of love, whose variableness and brevity he knew full well, he lifted his adoring gaze up to the eternal throne, and proclaimed of Him who sat upon it, that "God is love," and then, with a carefulness which should have attracted the attention of those who pervert or misapply this glorious truth, he proceeded to specify and describe the exact direction of this love: "Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

By this *limitation* we are taught that though there is a divine love which displays its fullness in the *wide creation*, seen in all the things so fearfully and wonderfully made; exhibited and proclaimed in the harmony of the rolling worlds; in the solid strength and changing beauty of our earthly dwelling-place; in the healthful processes of nature, in the wondrous mechanism of the body;

in the ethereal essence which tenants and ennobles it, and in the ample domain provided for the nourishment and growth of both these elements; displayed likewise in the complicated arrangement of the *providence of God*, by which all the products of creative skill are upholden and guided on to their appointed ends, each minute and mighty object held alike in his strong grasp, and guarded by his careful eye—nothing neglected, nothing lost, and nothing in the endless series made in vain—yet that, notwithstanding all the grandeur of this creative and preserving goodness, it is not in these departments of his action that the highest exhibition of the heart of God is made; that the true view passes beyond all these when it beholds the grand display, of which it can be written, in the fullest and most perfect sense: “Herein is love.”

To the consideration of this *highest love*, let me direct your thoughts. I know the majesty and glory of the theme. It is the great matter of angelic praise and wonder. I know also my own incapacity to set it forth in any of its real power and beauty; but it would seem to be the theme, almost the only theme, which befits such a Sabbath as Jehovah-Jesus has permitted us to welcome, in this land remote from home, in which we assemble and spread the table of our Lord, in the very place where the sacramental ordinance first was instituted, and where our Lord and Saviour yielded up his life, a ransom for us all. As we fix our thoughts upon this “love divine, all love excelling,” the text suggests the following points concerning it, which we shall consider:

- I. In whom it was originated.
- II. To whom it was displayed.
- III. At what a sacrifice it was revealed. Consider

I. In whom this wondrous love originated.

The language of the text emphasizes and impresses this: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.”

There is one aspect of that touching parable of the Prodigal Son, in respect to which it hardly constitutes a full expression of the Father’s love for sinful men. As regards the point to which our Lord directed the attention of his hearers, to wit, the lost estate of man, and the willingness of God to welcome every penitent—it is of course inimitable, but there is a phase of the divine love presented in the text which is not set forth in that illustration.

Conceive that it were added to the story, that, as the unhappy youth was rioting among his vile companions, or groveling among the swine he fed, the Father, in spite of this continued and unregretted waywardness, before a single thought of home had touched his ingrate heart, had remembered the prodigal, and resolved, if it were possible, to save him. Conceive that he had undertaken that work of reclamation with an energy and zeal that he had never displayed before, expending strength, fortune, and comfort in the undertaking, prosecuting it without weariness or discouragement, until

the love of his paternal heart had realized its longing, and the lost son stood before him with the cry, "Father, I yield to thine amazing love"—do you not see how such a representation would consist with the words: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us?"

In pondering this exhibition of the love of God, I conceive it to be all-important for us to remember that the overtures of mercy all came from God. The grace which man extends is rarely any other than that which has been sought, desired, implored. It is when the conqueror sees the vanquished at his feet, beseeching mercy, that his repents are kindled together, and he decrees to spare him. But had God waited until man assumed such an attitude before he reached out his golden scepter and cried, "Lo, I have found a ransom," never would a child of earth have entered the heavenly Jerusalem; never would a note of the new song have sounded before the throne of God. It was because God acted in man's behalf, before a single repentant or loving thought had entered his apostate soul; because, from the commencement of the ruin, the redemption began its influence; because, at the first view of the guilt and woe of man, of his own free-will and mere good pleasure, God hushed the voice of wrath, welcomed the voice of mercy, and decreed the sovereign purposes of grace, that the grand spectacle of a penitent and accepted sinner, in the embraces of a holy and forgiving Father, has ever been witnessed by the adoring hosts of heaven. Oh! let us believe and realize that the grace which saves us had its origin in God's unbought love, and then shall we cry, with fervent hearts: "Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us; but unto thy name we give the glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." Of this love consider.

II. To whom it was displayed.

Of this the text also teaches, in declaring that "He loved *us*." It thus concentrates the workings of this transcendent, divine love upon a *single province* in God's mighty empire, and upon a *single race* in the vast range of potentates and principalities and powers which God has created.

There is something in this which is astonishing, in whatsoever aspect it may be viewed. When you consider the place which it is probable man occupies in the scale of intellectual and moral life, the declaration that God's greatest love has been displayed in his behalf, could be received upon no other ground than that it hath been so declared by the unerring Word. In comparison with the suns and systems of the universe, how insignificant seems our world! In comparison with the grandeur of an archangel's thought or the rapture of a seraph's love, how feeble seem the powers of man! We can not wonder that men sometimes ask: "To such a world as earth, and to such a creature as man, how could the ma-

jesty of God descend, and the love of God display itself in invitations?" But let not the magnitude of this condescension lead us to doubt the oaths and promises of God. The earth is the great center of the spiritual universe. Man is the object of supremest interest to the ascending ranks of moral beings who tenant the starry worlds. Call man's powers insignificant, if you choose; call his position obscure; call his life a shadow or a dream—nevertheless, it is to man that this highest exhibition of this love of God has been presented.

And the wonder involved in all this is amazingly enhanced when you take into the account the *character and attitude* of those to whom this love was manifested. The object of the love of God was not the world in its primeval state, nor man in the integrity and perfection of his nature. It was the sin-rent world; it was the apostate rebel, man. Oh! consider this. To the very beings who had cast off his sway; to man, in the abasement of his moral ruin; to the ingrate who had received God's bounty, and spurned the hand that gave it; to the alien who had become a voluntary exile from his native land; to the sinner who, against the influences and appeals of nature had defied the law and love of God—the Father of an Infinite Majesty has extended offers of reconciliation, and has displayed a love which he has not revealed to any other beings. Well may we cry, with the Apostle, as we think of ourselves thus sought out and honored: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved *us*." We pass to the climax of this manifestation, by considering,

III. By what a sacrifice it was revealed.

Notwithstanding all that is impressive in the *origin* and the *objects* of this love of God, it is when we reach the climax in the teaching of the text that we are really humbled and hushed in awe: "He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is the announcement which unfolds the fullness of this love; this is the unequalled revelation of the heart of God, which constitutes the crowning glory among his infinite perfections. The idea contained in these words is the same which is expressed by Paul in the simple words: "God hath commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In these words the *sacrifice*, by which the love of God was revealed unto the world, is set forth before us. And I do not hesitate to affirm, there is in these words, whether of Paul or John, an importance, an eloquence, a charm, such as has never been expressed by the noblest utterances of sages, orators, or poets in all the years of time. Because they are familiar, we often fail to appreciate their richness, just as those who are reared in the valley of Chamouni think little of the mountain monarch which rises in peerless majesty above them, and wonder that men journey from afar to view it.

I pray you, scrutinize the meaning of these words, and while we sit thus on holy ground, open your hearts to their power.

The Father sent his Son into the world, and the Son came a willing Ambassador of mercy.

"He left his starry crown,
And laid his robes aside;
On wings of love came down,
And wept, and bled, and died!"

It was once noised through Europe as a wondrous fact, that the monarch of a mighty empire had laid aside his scepter, and in the attire of a simple traveler, was journeying from land to land, investigating the arts and industry of each; that through this lowly quest, he might enlighten and elevate his beloved people. Well might the world wonder at such a kingly condescension.

But how much greater was the love displayed, when He who was in the bosom of the Father, stripped himself of the glories of the Godhead, descended from his exalted throne, and came down through the starry worlds to this revolted earth, taking upon him the form of man; by such condescension making

"Our vexed, accursed humanity, as worn by him,
Begin to be a blessed, yea, a sacred thing for awe and love, and ministering!"

Ah! friends, can we conceive of the humiliation of the God incarnate, who dwelt with men, became the friend of sinners and the benefactor of the world?

What riches of love were manifested in that life of the Son of God, in such a nature, and in such a world! Look into that workshop in the vale of Nazareth, at the well of Sychar, into that dwelling-place in Bethany, and of the grace and tenderness which brings the world's Creator into such relations of obedience, guidance, and affection; what can you say more fitly than the Apostle's word: "Herein is love"?

But when you think that God sent his Son to die a willing sacrifice for human guilt, how does this love expand to an infinite and overwhelming magnitude! The death of Christ for human sin, by which innocence bleeds for guilt; in which the beloved Son falls stricken by the Father's hand; in which every bursting sigh, every blood-drop, and every pang, are pleas for the redemption of those who hung Him to the tree; oh! if we acknowledge that this has been, must we not also feel that in this transaction the force and wealth of an infinite love have been expended, and God has offered unto man the very fullness of his heart.

If we feel and confess that "God is love" as he reveals himself in the utterances of nature and of Providence; that the glory of the stars is the radiance of his love; that the voices of the ocean are the echoes of his love; that the beauty of the world is the picture of his love; that the comforts of our lives are

the bounties of his love; if it be true, as has been said, that the common mercies which we enjoy all sing of divine love as the sea-shell whispers of the deep sea, from which it came—then how much more should our hearts discern the love of God when we follow the only begotten Son, his beloved, in whom he had delight forever, into the olive shade of yon garden of Gethsemane, where he lay in the bloody sweat and bitter agony; into the judgment-hall of Pilate, where he was arraigned, and mocked, and scourged, and spit upon—along this *via dolorosa* through which he toiled, bearing the heavy cross, on to the Golgotha, where, with the crown of thorns, the drooping head and mangled form, he hung above the trembling earth, beneath the darkened sky, the Lord of glory, the world's Redeemer, the loving Friend of man; yet mocked by the multitude, scorned by the priests, and even derided by the dying men who hung beside him.

O thou God of truth and justice! can all this be true? Has our world witnessed such a divine and dying love? It is true. The blood of Jehovah-Jesus has fallen on the soil of this holy land; the hosts of God have gathered trembling and astonished at such a sight. The Father's eye has rested on this ancient city as the dying-place of his beloved Son. It is the truth of God; and, brethren, as we begin to realize and feel the power which attends it, let our hearts bend in humility and penitence, saying, with the Apostle: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Turning from this plain view of the Gospel grace, let me ask:

1. With such a love before you, can you not trust your God and come to him in the spirit of adoption? I ask this of believers. As these grand truths pass in array before us, they blend into one cheering word for the heart that can accept them. "Fear not, they sing together, for this God is your God; he will be your guide even unto death." In yourself you see many things to annoy and to distress you; but with your eye upon this surpassing love, there is nothing which can give you good cause for fear. All things are yours, through covenant love. The eye of the loving Father is ever upon you; you are walking in his light; you are strengthened by his power; you are fed from his table. In a little while, by the same grace which now sustains you, you shall come into his temple and cast your crown before him. Lift up your eyes and behold these tokens of his love. Trust in him without fear. Consecrate your life to his service, and there will be no promise in all the word of God which shall not be fulfilled unto you, as you pass from grace to glory.

2. Is there nothing in this love to touch your hard and impenitent heart, and bring you to the attitude and utterance of the Prodigal? I ask this of those who are not yet reconciled to God. It seems wonderful that you are indifferent to the rights and love

of God, your Creator and Sovereign, in a world where your life is an affair of hours and moments only, and in which you lie in the condemned cell, continually awaiting execution. It seems wonderful that you should refuse to love and serve him, when your whole nature points towards him, and every faculty declares that to obey him is your reasonable service. But it is far more amazing that, with hearts that can feel for human sorrow and acknowledge human kindness, you are living on in sight of Calvary, within hearing of God's most loving call, and yet drop no tear, lift up no prayer, express no gratitude.

Oh! this is dreadful; it is the wonder of heaven; it is the delight of hell. In the name of that bleeding Lamb, I ask you, is there not one tender spot in all that heart which can feel for his sorrow and welcome his love? Open it in this accepted time. "Behold the man" who died that you might live!

"Oh! come, and with his children taste
The blessings of his love;
While hope attends the sweet repast
Of nobler joys above."

EDITOR'S NOTE.—We requested a copy of this discourse for publication. It was preached in an upper room, on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, in March, 1860, to a little company of Christians, near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and a few rods from the traditional site of Calvary. It was also in full view of the Mount of Olives and other memorable sacred localities, imparting rare interest and solemnity to the occasion. After the sermon, twelve disciples celebrated the Communion of the Last Supper; perhaps the first time in many centuries, when such a circle has assembled in that place for such a purpose.

SERMON XXX.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE AMERICAN AND FOREIGN CHRISTIAN UNION, IN TREMONT TEMPLE, IN BOSTON, MAY 29, 1860.

BY REV. EDWARD N. KIRK, D.D.,

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THE OPEN DOOR.

"BEHOLD, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."—Rev. 3:8.

IMAGINE the situation of the Church in Philadelphia at that time; in a little provincial town, remote from the track of apostolical visitations, and from the invigorating influences of the great centers of religious life—Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome. The Neronian persecution had made havoc of many a little flock.

And how had she stood through her fiery trials, in this disadvantageous position? Among the most firm and faithful. Small in numbers, weak in social influence, she had remained true to her Lord, under fierce persecutions; keeping his word; as a regiment guards its banner in battle, under the scorching fires of Grecian philosophy and skepticism, Pagan idolatry, and Jewish Rabbis; not denying his glorious name even at the tribunal of Nero's magistrates.

From his throne in heaven, He that has the key of David beholds her, with the most affectionate interest. To her he sends this message by the beloved John: Go, tell her, I know her works; her feebleness and her fidelity. She desires to work for me, to extend my kingdom, to put down the kingdom of Satan in all its various forms; and I have therefore opened before her a door which no earthly power can shut. No matter how strong her foes may be, how rich, learned, or numerous; no matter how arrogantly they may claim the title of the true, ancient, only Church of God, I will subdue their haughty spirit, and bring them so low that they can no longer persecute the saints of God, nor hinder their useful labors.

The history of this church is not sufficiently preserved to give us much light upon the actual fulfillment of these promises. We only know that when, as Gibbon expresses it, "Christians deplored in the overthrow of Ephesus, the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick of the Revelation," and even when "the populousness of Smyrna had come to be supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Arminians, Philadelphia alone was saved, among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, still standing erect, a *column* in a scene of ruins." She was, in fact, the last city of Asia Minor to resist, and to fall before, the power of the Turk.

The description of this local church is a just description of the Protestant Church viewed as one. And the promise, therefore, once verified to that local church, remains, in every age, a promise to every other to which the description is applicable. Where there is fidelity to Christ, and a desire to advance his kingdom, there he promises to open an effectual door, that no power, human or Satanic, can shut.

Brethren, I pause here to start an inquiry—Was the Protestant movement a mistake? or was it an emancipation from a usurped dominion over the human conscience—a loyal uprising for the honor of our King—a struggle to restore to him his crown—an effort to bring back the hidden Gospel to perishing men? If the former, I have nothing more now to say. If the latter, then I am here to encourage you in this Christian work; and my purpose is,

First. To recall to your minds what is the appropriate work of the Protestant Church; and then,

Second. To show you that the Lord has set before her an open door.

I. *What then is the appropriate work of the Protestant Church, or the true Church of God?*

It is, 1. *A defense of the Gospel.* If philosophers attack it, her ablest philosophers must meet them in honorable encounter, in the open field. If science arrays her batteries against the battlements of Zion, they must be met with the weapons adapted to their methods of attack. If great religious corporations promulgate a false Christianity, and substitute a spurious gospel for the pure doctrines of Christ, the Church must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." It is just as much our duty to detect and expose false doctrine, as it is the duty of bank-officers to warn the people against counterfeit money. And a charity that objects to that, is treason in court-livery.

There are, indeed, Protestants who think we had better not disturb the Catholics, because "they are our neighbors, and good citizens, and estimable friends." Honest, earnest Catholics must laugh at such Protestantism. "Why," they may well say, "did you not then stay in the old Church? You are either honest in upholding Luther, or dishonest; or too indolent and indifferent to leave the ranks to which you do not belong." "Let it alone." Oh! no; its claims are too important for that; its pretensions too lofty. Let it alone! Why, not even an honest Catholic should ask so much as that of us. If his theology is the Gospel, it will gain by discussion. Whoever has the truth need not fear an examination of his doctrines. No, we have no right to let the Catholic doctrines alone. We are as much bound as Luther, or Wickliffe, or Paul, to uphold the pure Gospel of Christ, in face of a mighty hierarchy, who are laboring to bring it under the monstrous errors of the Latin Church. If we do take that ground, let us abjure the Reformation, and creep back to the darkness of the age when no one inquired what was truth, but simply received what a few men had decided to be truth. What was it Christ hated in the Nicolaitans? It was their "doctrine." What was it Paul anathematized? False doctrine. Was he indifferent to false theories concerning the doctrine of justification by faith, or any other vital element of the Christian system? This is his language: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Did he mean that he should exult in the everlasting ruin of any human being? No; his simple feeling was, an acquiescence in God's opposition to a false Christianity, because that secures the destruction of the soul. The Church is God's witness, the pillar and basis that holds up in this world the great edifice of the Gospel system.

Her mission is also aggressive.

2. *She must proclaim the Gospel to every creature.* She is to bring souls out from every way of death, from every soul-destroying institution, and lead them to the Saviour.

Romanism now stands related to Christianity much as Judaism did at first. Judaism was a perversion of the Scriptures and the Church, in the interests of a hierarchy, hiding from men's eyes both the law and the Gospel. Did the apostles of the Lord then permit it to hinder their carrying the Gospel to other men? Never, and no where. Did they concede the claim of the Jews to be the only Church of God not needing the Gospel? Never! Instead of that, as the Master commanded, they always went first to the Jews.

The Protestant Church, then, has not taken the position assigned her by her Lord. Like the Church of Philadelphia, though she has only a little strength, yet, likewise, she has kept the word of Christ, and not denied his name. The Protestant Church in America is weak in her aggressive movements against heresy, from a false charity and an amiable ignorance. The churches of Britain are mainly true and effective in their opposition to it. The Continental Protestants are firm in spirit, and awake to their responsibilities, but weak in resources. It is every where with them a mighty struggle against a foe having every worldly, factitious advantage.

The description of Philadelphia, then, shows exactly the attitude and condition of the churches of the Reformation. They are true to Christ in the main, while the moral forces of zeal, faith, self-denial, and prayer are very small. "Thou hast a little strength;" and, therefore, to them is the same promise addressed: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door."

II. *What is that open door?* It is such as was given to Paul in Philippi, when he first carried the Gospel across the frontier of Europe; an opportunity to get into prison, to work hard, to suffer much; but also to get the Gospel there, and plant a Christian church. You will find another instance of an open door when Paul went to Rome. He did not go there by gentle stages, and in a luxurious ease. He went there, and lived there, a despised prisoner, under arrest for an alleged crime. When we are as ready to suffer for Christ and the Gospel, and the souls of men; when we count neither property nor life too dear a sacrifice for the privilege of preaching the Gospel to the Romans—then, too, we shall find this promise fulfilled to us. The door is open, and no man can shut it.

To many persons the real state of that false Church is incomprehensible. They see, on the one hand, unmistakable signs of dependence on secular power, of decrepitude and approaching dissolution. On the other hand, they notice indications of a renewed

and vigorous youth. Both aspects are real and reconcilable. Let us, then, distinctly observe and carefully examine both, in order rightly to appreciate them. If any imagine that "an open door" means that there are no barriers to be overcome, no enemies to encounter, no conflicts or sacrifices, they misapprehend the case. Let it then be distinctly recognized that:

1. *Rome is earnestly striving to reconquer the world.* The old instinct of empire is not yet dead within her. Every where we trace her active spirit, striving to drive us out, or to keep us out, at home and abroad. She is trying to shut the door against us. To these efforts we must not be blind. We should fairly notice all that obstructs our efforts to restore Christ's dominion in that revolted province; to preach the Gospel to those millions from whom it is hidden. The power of her hierarchy is formidable; her efforts at this day are gigantic. And yet it remains true that the Lord has opened a door of access to her people; a door that would admit ten times the laborers we now employ.

Perhaps no surer index can be given of the prosperity and decline of the Roman Church than the position of the Jesuit order. If you find them creeping forth into daylight, and recalled to prominent stations, take it as a confession of fear in the Roman Church. From the beginning of its existence, wherever that order has had the ascendancy for a series of years, their policy has become unendurable to even the Catholic nations, and their order has been banished. Then the Papal cause waned again; and this corps of ecclesiastical Zouaves must be enlisted again. Therefore, we are now in another epoch of the Jesuits; and our day is distinguished by underground operations, sappers and miners; for nothing more characterizes that body of men than bold and arrogant pretensions, combined with unostentatious laboriousness and unscrupulous zeal. We are, therefore, hearing them proclaim in high places the famous doctrine of Hildebrand: "Rome is the anointed sovereign of the world; and the earth is contending against its Creator and Redeemer, so long as it keeps the crown of universal empire from the humble brow of the Bishop of Rome." Read the articles of the recently suppressed journal, *L'Univers*, at Paris, and Mr. Brownson's *Review*, for information and confirmation, if you need it. The education of the young is extensively passing into the hands of those men; and they do their work most thoroughly.

The most earnest and unwearied efforts are now on foot to bring England, Russia, and the United States, under Catholic control. In regard to Russia, a few extracts from Mr. Brownson's *Review* will bring their schemes before us.

Speaking of *Etudes de Théologie*, a work by two Jesuits, he says: "We are glad that they treat the Russian question as a primary question in our day, and regard the reconciliation of Russia with

the Holy See, as a matter that should engage the thoughts and the prayers of Christians throughout the world. The reunion of Russia, under simply a political point of view, is a most desirable measure. It is necessary to preserve the proper balance of power in Europe. Great Britain has never been very scrupulous in regard to the rights of other nations, and France is still less so." He then proceeds to show that there is no hope for the stability of European society from either of those kingdoms; their hope for tranquillity, justice, progress, and freedom, is in Rome and Russia combined. He adds: "Russia, no longer in schism, uniting her material force to the moral power of the Holy See, would be able to restore order to demoralized Europe. This is a question of the very highest interest alike to religion and civilization. The two great conquests now most important to religion and civilization are the conversion of Russia and the United States. These are the only two really growing States now existing, and the only that really suffice for themselves. The reconciliation of Russia with the Holy See would reestablish the reign of law in Europe, and secure the conversion and civilization of Asia. The conversion of the United States would secure the triumph of religion, and its attendant civilization, on this continent."

This may suffice to show Protestants, whose charity forbids their thinking the leaders of Catholicism capable of wishing to destroy their faith and their Church, that this is the present attitude of the Catholic leaders. The Protestant faith is to be swept away; that is the war-cry. An Italian monk must rule the world, by the help of the Inquisition, or the world will never reach the millennial era.

The missionary spirit is growing in the Church of Rome; and her efforts especially for the conversion of this country are becoming more vigorous. Take one fact alone to illustrate it. The Pope has recently presented to the Catholics of this country a college-edifice in the city of Rome, purely for training missionaries for our people. And among the reasons urged for it is, that priests, to convert us into good Catholics, must be men that know something besides books, and something about us.

And, now, what is the result of all this movement? Let us look in two or three directions for an answer. Great Britain is now entered upon as a Catholic diocese. Heretofore it was heathen ground, having over its religious affairs a Vicar apostolical, with foreign titles. The priests were not made rigidly Roman, but suffered to accommodate themselves to their circumstances, and be English or Irish. Education was left to the bishops; Papal claims were not asserted. Indeed, it was the standing reply of the clergy, when upbraided for their subjection to a foreign king: "The Pope has only a nominal power here." Now, in three fourths of a century they have grown in Great Britain from 100,000 to

4,000,000. In these statistics, as in those of the Catholics in the United States, it must always be remembered that other religious bodies are equally growing, and that much of the swelling of numbers in Great Britain and America is only so much diminution in Ireland and Germany. Still, it is manifest that the Catholic religion has assumed a great breadth in England. Cardinal Wiseman has recognized, officially, the return of England to the pale of the Church, the fold of Pius IX., with some stray sheep still out of the inclosure. It is now divided into dioceses, with an Archbishop over the whole. Thus the Cardinal signalizes the great event in a letter to his clergy, secular and regular: "The great work is complete; what you have long prayed for is granted; your beloved country has received a place among the fair churches which, normally constituted, form the splendid aggregate of Catholic communion. *Catholic England has been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament*, from which its light had long vanished, and begins now anew its course of regularly adjusted action round the center of unity, the source of jurisdiction, of light, and of vigor." And Father Newman, one of the seceders from the English Protestant Church, in a sermon delivered on the occasion of the enthronement of Dr. Ullathorn as Bishop of Birmingham, says: "The mystery of God's providence is now fulfilled, and though he did not recollect of any people on earth but those of Great Britain, who, having *once rejected the religion of God*, were again restored to the bosom of the Church—God had done it for them. It was wonderful in their eyes. THE HOLY HIERARCHY HAD BEEN RESTORED. *The grave was opened, and Christ was coming out.*"

"And, be it observed, though the Bishop of London, Lord Eldon, and Lord John Russell, have all raised their voices against this illegal and traitorous act of encroachment on the *ecclesiastical* constitution of Protestant England, as by law established, yet nothing has been done to quell, or even to arrest or disturb its progress!"

In Ireland the work was formerly resigned to the hands of a monk with no Irish sympathies, but utterly Roman. Now every thing is changed. By order of the Pope, Dr. Cullen, the Legate, convened a Synod of the Prelates; presiding, by the same order, in place of the primate, Dr. Dixon. At this Synod resolutions were passed, condemning all mixed education, and that of the National Schools in particular; and demanding a national grant for Roman Catholic education exclusively—under the exclusive control of the clergy. When the prelates had all signed the document exhibiting this plan, they put it forth in a pastoral letter, in which they remind the British Ministry of a fact which it is very important they and the whole kingdom should remember, that they hold office by the sufferance of the Irish members of Parliament returned through their influence.

The *Kilkenny Journal* speaks thus of the matter: "It is now a stand-up fight between the Protestantism of England on the one side, and the United Catholic Hierarchy on the other, and our life on it, the bishops will win." Now, monastic establishments are being multiplied. Missionaries are coming in. And in a word, Catholic bishops, by the balance of power, their favorite instrument there and here, are virtually a constituent element of the Protestant government of Great Britain. Lord Derby is said to have lost his place in 1852 by losing the vote of these Popish members. And in 1858, Lord Palmerston was shaken by their vote against him. And this was given, because, although he favored the Austrian policy abroad, he favored Protestantism at home. In the prisons, hospitals, army, and schools, you see the strides Rome is making. And most melancholy! you see the sons of Wilberforce and other eminent Protestants going over toward and to them. In this country we witness very much the same progress, excepting in the defection of prominent persons. Thus Rome is striving to shut the door.

2. But Christ is opening it. Let us turn the glass, and look at the other side of the case. Rome has, in fact, reached her climax. To see this, we take a somewhat comprehensive survey. Let us go back, and understand the real movement of this tremendous heresy, this fatal treason to the kingdom of Christ. And we must guard against a mistake quite common, of dating the Reformation and Protestantism in the sixteenth century, and tracing it to Luther and Zwingle. It was neither the work of Luther, nor of that century. Down-hill always begins up-hill. The traveler begins to descend the moment he has reached the summit. You will find the real reformation, if you can search deep enough down into that mysterious thing, the human heart, from the hour when, by the great mass of private members and the lower clergy of the Christian Church, the doctrines of Hildebrand were felt in their tremendous pressure; just when a pampered clergy felt themselves most secure, and a desponding people were despairing of relief. The Reformation was, at birth, only a concentration, an organization of innumerable, isolated, and long-cherished personal convictions and sentiments—an outburst of forces accumulating for ages. It came, and swept like a deluge over Europe. Then came the reaction; and most marvelously, the regurgitating wave reached only the southern boundary of the Teutonic and Slavonic races, leaving the Latin peoples in the Church of Rome. Yes, Austria became Protestant; twelve to one of her citizens accepting the evangelical faith. But the troubled waters of the Papacy finally settled, leaving France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Austria, and parts of Germany, within their embrace; the mightiest of the Catholic kingdoms being that of France. In that kingdom Protestantism was burned, dragooned, banished; and

in its place came a cold, heartless skepticism, which wrought out the Revolution; infusing into it the demoniacal spirit which made that lovely land a Pandemonium. France became profoundly skeptical toward Christianity, and antagonistic toward the Papal court. Her political, literary, and social power in Europe gave ascendancy to her sentiments in all the higher classes of the continent. This, with the internal decay of the Catholic nations, threatened at length the complete overthrow of the Papal power; the education of the people in other kingdoms was passing from under the control of the Roman court; the appointment of Bishops was slipping from their hands; as also the regulating of the Church festivals, formerly instruments of immense power.

In Italy itself the revolution of 1848 induced the liberal party to undertake liberalizing the Court of Rome. Lammens' theories were to be put in execution. The Pope was to become the idol of the people, the chief of the vast democratic party. Was ever dream more idle; absolute authority to give a field for the expression and action of the popular will; infallible dogmatism to establish a free press and an uncontrolled platform; oil and water to mix; fire and water to become friendly neighbors! That was the great experiment which promised to make the Papacy as compatible with the institutions, sentiments, and movements of the nineteenth century as it had been with those of the twelfth.

Pius IX., a good-natured but weak man, having been elected by the liberal party, and in reference to his known tendencies toward a liberal policy, at once and honestly placed himself at the head of this new order of things. The experiment demonstrated that the vital elements of the Papal system are in absolute and immutable antagonism to the very spirit of the age, the movements of Providence, the manhood of the race, the maturity of society. Popery and despotism are genus and species.

The flight of this unhappy man to Gaeta brought the people into power. The despots of Europe, however, soon crushed them, and gave the reins into the hands of the Priest-party, with Antonelli at their head. The Pope is now their tool; not the hand that moves them. Taught by his new masters, he now repents of no sins so deeply as of his former patriotic desires, and his efforts to lighten the burdens of his people.

From that day we behold the spasmodic convulsions of a galvanized corpse in the movements of that arrogant political party. This spirited movement which we are witnessing, from the Eastern Archipelago to the coast of Western Ireland — from Labrador to Tahiti, is only one, though it employs 200,000,000 hands.

Romanism is indeed thus revived; but its revival is the result of a political intrigue, not of a spiritual growth. To a spiritual mind nothing can be clearer nor more striking than this contrast. There are two revivals, for instance, going on in Ireland. The

one arises from men's hearing the Gospel, and engaging simply and seriously in the worship of God ; the other, from the plottings of political prelates. So it is all over the world. I do not say that there are not hundreds of persons sincerely entering more earnestly into the performance of Catholic rites, because they are becoming more earnest in their spiritual longings. But I do mean to affirm that from the Pope downward through every rank, the movement bears every mark of a purely political zeal. If you ask for proof, I will cite only this : the whole Catholic world is astir to keep the Bishop of Rome in the ownership of two or three provinces he has no more business to own and rule than any other clergyman.

But I advance to say : her movements are weak, because they are not in the line of the great and ultimate purposes of Providence.

There is good in them, but it belongs to ages irrecoverably past, and they are not with but against the advance of the human mind and human society. I do not mean that they are not employed by Providence, for every being, institution, and event is so employed. But I mean that they are employed like the wrath of man, which may be made to praise God but does not work the righteousness of God. He uses it as he used the envy of Haman to exalt Mordecai. The human mind has passed beyond the period of its pupilage. Each individual indeed begins life an infant, and needs tutors and governors ; so there is also an infancy and maturity of society. The world is grown up now. But Roman priests insist on keeping the hour-book and the primer still in its hands. The priest is still insisting on men's believing the Church because she can make herself intelligible, but not to trust to their understanding of what God says, because he can not express himself intelligibly to any but priests. Or, to show you still more definitely the absurdity of their position—at the foundation of the whole system lies this proposition, and the whole effort of that mighty institution bears on, inducing men to accept it—the Church can understand God's language, but the people that compose that Church are sure to misunderstand it if they try. When an apostle of Christ, Peter himself, writes a letter to the churches of Sythinia, or Paul a letter to the brethren in Rome, they can not understand Peter or Paul ; but they can understand the successors of Peter when they write explanations of those letters. Take away that proposition, and the Roman hierarchy becomes a Protestant clergy, and Romanism changes its whole character.

This is the age of science, of a free press, of free discussion, of the open struggle for mastery between truth and error. Rome's method of treating error is obsolete. Galileo must see the earth move if it does move, and the Church that puts him in the Inqui-

sition for it shows herself unfit for the position of an interpreter of God's revelation.

But more particularly her outer defenses and buttresses are failing. I direct your attention to every prominent Catholic kingdom for an illustration. Belgium was once as thoroughly papal as Spain. Between Charles V. and the Duke of Alva, Protestantism was very thoroughly rooted out of its soil. But Belgium is more French than Flemish. A liberal party has existed there perhaps since the French Revolution. In 1830 the priest party joined the liberals in securing a separation from the Protestant government of Holland, but in the excitement of the times inadvertently permitted the liberal party to make a constitution which gives Belgium more spiritual and intellectual freedom than any monarchy on the continent. The consequence is, that the civil power of that kingdom, while nominally Catholic, no longer suppresses freedom of inquiry, worship, and Christian labor. Hence the Evangelical Society has been steadily advancing to its present strong position. I remember in 1836, when we were amazed to find among us a clergyman soliciting funds to erect a Protestant-French church in Brussels. Now there are seven; and in the country more than thirty churches, thirteen preaching stations, thirteen schools, nine colporteurs, and an efficient tract society; while the British and Foreign Bible Society has a permanent agency there. Those churches are growing in knowledge and zeal; the spirit of prayer and of self-sacrifice are manifesting themselves most cheerfully among them. The Romanists are giving increasing attention to the preaching of the Gospel.

We look now at Austria. Maximilian I. aspired to the Papedom, and so favored an anti-papal spirit in his subjects. He even spoke kindly of Luther, as of a man who, he thought, might one day be serviceable to him. But for more than three centuries the spirit of the Hapsburg princes has been unchangeably hostile to Protestantism in its every aspect—political, intellectual, and religious. An unrelenting hostility to the Protestant spirit of Hungary has existed at the court; at times forced to make concessions, to be retracted at the first opportune moment. By the last concordat, or compact with the Pope, Austria gave herself into the hands of the priests. In one aspect it is well, as it has served to develop their spirit, and show how incompatible the genius of the system is with the true progress of a nation. Ever since that step was taken the government has been getting into a position of increasing embarrassment. France has conquered her and driven her virtually out of Italy; her government is bankrupt; her highest personages are suspected of embezzling the public funds; her debt is growing, her credit sinking; her military defense of the Pope annihilated; and her people can bear no increase of taxation.

This is the right arm on which the pretended Chief Apostle of Christ has been leaning.

Turn then to France, whose kings have been the elder sons of the Church. Twice they have held the Popes their prisoners. If France is Catholic, she is the birthplace of Calvin and the Huguenots. Her literature, her politics, her science, her philosophy, her daily press, her military spirit, are all anti-papal. Her people are Catholics but in name, to perhaps the extent of one half. The French mind is a free mind. It must think. One instance may show how the people are taking up the questions between Rome and us: In a village of France, some lawyers, assembled in a coffee-house, were conversing about a peasant who had been fined and imprisoned for saying the Virgin ought not to be worshiped. One remarked: "It served him right." "I'm not so sure of that," replied one of the number; "I doubt if the Scriptures are not on his side." They ransacked the village for a copy of the Bible, and spent the evening in examining it. The Emperor is now holding the Pope in duress. He reads him sound homilies on the nature of a bishop's office, and shows him how desirable it is that he should not have too much property to look after, lest he should neglect his flock; and that it might be undesirable for the holiest pastor in the world to call in soldiers to shoot down his people when they do not behave well. He then says to him: "Now, sir, you must understand that I will have none of your beggars in my kingdom, soliciting for money as a tax for the Church, which is to pay your army for crushing the rights of your fellow-citizens. And you shall not send a single decree, rescript, or any other official document here to be read by a single Frenchman, until I have cast my eye over it." He has said to the Jesuit paper, *L'Univers*: "We have now had enough of your illuminations. You may henceforth put your light under a bushel." It is true the paper is re-established under a new name; but even Antonelli, amid all his cares, could not suppress the witty but uncatholic remark, in allusion to the inferior ability of the new editor: "It is the old legend revived of St. Denis walking without his head."

The Protestantism of France is now alive. In 1820 there was not more than one evangelical pastor among the Protestant clergy: now there are a thousand. There are 1550 churches and stations in which the Gospel is preached. There are 1900 schools conducted by evangelical societies and churches. Two general missionary societies in Paris guide the work of missions throughout the empire. The Lyons church is a powerful missionary society for that important city. The Geneva society likewise sustains a strong corps of laborers in France. Thus we see this bulwark of Popery giving way.

Turn now to Italy, classic Italy, where the blight of the Papacy has been so great that the people but for foreign intrusion would

long since have thrown it into the ditch. How wonderful are the changes there!

It must suffice now to say, that Northern Italy regards itself as virtually included in the bull of excommunication ; and thus, by the Pope's own act, for which it thanks him, separated from the Papacy. They remain Catholics, but abandon the political part of the system. The king of Northern Italy, who may yet be king of all Italy, has long ago begun to let the conscience and the Bible free. The steamer of to-morrow may bring the tidings that Naples is free, and not a Bourbon nor a Hapsburg foot remains on the neck of an Italian State. On the other hand, political changes may occur by which the Papal throne will be again buttressed for another term of years. But its present weakness none can question, and its probable overthrow seems to be near.

What, then, comes of all this ? Two results. The Protestant churches have but little of the strength inspired by zeal and faith. And yet he that hath the keys of David hath set before them an open door. Mighty barriers have been removed within this century. They have unlimited access to the Catholic people of the world, and the motives calling them to carry the Gospel are mighty. One pertains to the safety of our own civil and religious institutions, which have no such enemies as the Papal hierarchy, whom their people innocently sustain in their wicked schemes. The other is, the spiritual wants of that people. Like all others of our sinful race, they are in two classes : some feeling their wants, others ignorant of them.

One of the strangest phenomena of our age is the comparative indifference of Protestant Christians to both. It is in vain we exhibit the open door to those who have no desire to enter it.

I turn then to the lukewarm Protestant, who, while he would dread to have his children or friends drawn into the fatal vortex of this delusion, yet looks unmoved on the thousands who receive the false doctrines of the Roman Church as the word of God's salvation. When we inquire of him, Shall we disturb the quiet of the contented Catholic ?—he replies : "No ; in the name of charity let them alone." This is a charity that would have retained the Son of God in heaven ; that would have staid the sacrifice of Calvary ; that would have quenched the zeal of the apostles, and condemned their uncharitable zeal for disturbing the honest Jew in his attachment to the church of his fathers, the religion of Moses. This is a charity that would have kept ancient Europe in its primitive paganism, and modern Europe in the Roman Church. Bring forward your reasons for non-intervention, for not disturbing the quiet of souls in the bondage of error. Lay them beside the Epistles of Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, the biography of even the noblest Catholics. Had your reasonings

prevailed, there had been no Paul, no Augustine, no Columba, no Xavier, no Loyola, no Luther, no Knox, no Martin nor Brainard.

But if we should concede to your scruples about invading in the king's name a territory usurped by one of the most dangerous, bold, and blasphemous of his enemies, then we call your attention to another class, about whom you can have no such scruples. The missionaries of the Foreign Union are constantly finding Roman Catholics deeply conscious of a want which their faith does not supply, and vaguely longing for them they know not what. To such the Gospel is always welcome when they hear it. The door is open to them. Will you enter?

I will describe them. In an obscure village of France, a poor rag-picker heard one of our missionaries, in conversation, describing the freeness, adaptedness, and fullness of the Gospel to the needy soul of man. As the missionary closed his remarks, the poor Catholic exclaimed: "Oh! sir, you are blessed in knowing all these things! Ignorant and sinful creature that I am, I dare not ask for such blessings on such a miserable being." Was not the door open there? and would you not enter it? Hear another from the same village. As the missionary was leaving the place of meeting, a young woman met him, beaming with joy, and exclaiming: "Oh! how changed I am within a few weeks. Before hearing you, I was petulant, passionate, ugly. And for a long time I have been groaning under the load of sins, crying out: 'Can nothing make me good?' I wanted something, but what it was I could not imagine. And yet I could not keep from searching for it, as in the dark. I went constantly to mass, but always came back more dissatisfied, and searched the more eagerly for, I knew not what, nor where, nor how. But now I have found what I want; and an immense peace fills my soul." Here is a door opened. Surely you would not scruple to enter it. Well, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, hath opened thousands beside. Enter, then, ye blood-ransomed servants of Christ!

SERMON XXXI.

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LOT'S BARGAIN.

"ABRAM dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."—GEN. 13: 12, 13.

WHEN Abram went out from Ur of the Chaldees at the command of God to settle in Canaan, he took with him the son of his deceased brother, named Lot. This young man went with him first to Haran, in Mesopotamia; thence to Canaan; thence to Egypt, when driven there by the famine; and thence to Canaan again, when the way was opened for a return.

These several journeyings and tarryings occupied a period of about five years. At this time, we are not surprised to read of Abram that he was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold; for, though we are not told as to the extent of his possessions when he began his journey from Ur, yet, as he was seventy years of age and more, we suppose him to have gone out with something in the way of possessions; and as he went at the command of God, for the commencement of a new economy in the Divine administration, we expect to see him receive accordantly with that economy, as the tokens of God's approval, that temporal prosperity which God was accustomed to bestow as the sign of his satisfaction, and the index of the greater spiritual good, now and hereafter to be conferred.

But the young man Lot, of whose age we are not aware, had also considerable possessions in "flocks, and herds, and tents." Hitherto he had lived in close companionship with Abram; but prosperity often breeds uneasiness between relatives otherwise in concord, and this uneasiness often begins between the children or dependents of the principal parties. So was it here. There was a strife, as there often is yet in that land, between the herdsmen of Lot's cattle and the herdsmen of Abram's cattle, probably about the wells of water where they gathered for drink.

It is in this connection that the sacred historian adds very tersely, "And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt in the land." As if he had said: "It were not safe that a feud should proceed in

this company of strangers, who might be unceasingly watched by those into whose land they had come, as their flocks spread out to eat up the pasturage and drink up the water. Besides, it were a shame that a quarrel go on among the adherents of the Most High in the presence of the advancing heathenism of the country."

And Abram, who was not only a man of faith and piety toward God, but of large common-sense and enlightened candor and unselfishness as regards men, proposed at once an adjustment of the difficulty. He said to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, I will go to the left."

And now commences Lot's independent history. He lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as thou comest unto Zoar. And so Lot chose him all the plain of the Jordan: that is, the country now covered with the Dead Sea. "And Lot journeyed east," for he was now probably near to Hebron, or still further west. "And they separated themselves the one from the other: Abram dwelt in Canaan," the country south and west of Jerusalem, "and Lot dwelt in or among the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

We will look, in the first place, at Lot's principle of conduct in the step he has taken; and next, at the success of it, as each are developed in the story.

I. And you will at once, on looking at Lot, select him as a young man who is ambitious to make his way in the world. He is fond of property, and has a sharp eye where his pecuniary interests are concerned. There is a difference perceptible at once between him and his uncle; for, had he been like Abram, instead of proceeding to grasp at once at the best end of the proposal, thinking only of his advantage in the bargain, he would rather have referred the matter back to Abram, asking him, as the elder man, and as his benefactor, to make the first selection; and have contented himself with the alternative. This would have been to act with a modesty becoming his age, his relations to his uncle, and the evident care and aid heretofore rendered him.

But Lot acted in forgetfulness of all this. He thought only of himself and his own interests. He was willing to separate provided he could make any thing by it, and he grasped eagerly at the advantage which the proffer held out to him. And you will notice the principle on which his selection was made, as well as

the motive which underlay it: a selection which was to affect all his after-life, and determine the fate of his family also.

To the eastward of their present place of sojourn lay the land of the Jordan, a pleasant, well-watered, and fertile country, full of good pasture for cattle, and well studded with towns and cities.

On the other side water was more scarce, pasture more scanty, and the seasons more precarious. There were no permanent and pleasant streams like the Jordan, and the towns at this time seem to have been few. Life there seemed to promise a slower and more uncertain advancement to a young and ambitious man.

Lot made his choice in view of these facts. It would seem as if no thought entered his mind as to how his choice would affect his religious interests, or whether God would approve his selection. He seems to have asked no question as to whether the country about Sodom would be a good place to bring up a family in, or whether life there would be dangerous to his own peace of mind. Indeed, he seems to have banished from his thought the religious aspects of the case altogether. If he had any scruples about the religious interests involved; if he thought how careful Abram had been hitherto to select his dwelling and order his life so as to please God, these thoughts were suppressed, for they were not prominent enough to demand the notice of the historian. His thought plainly was to be rich—possibly, to be as rich as his conscientious uncle, whose conscientiousness he did not imitate. At all events, the thing that decided him was the worldly advantage.

But this is not the full statement of the case. The reputation of the region which Lot chose as his residence was already established, and is given in the words of the record: "The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." They were in advance of the rest of the land in iniquity by four or five hundred years; and in less than twenty years from the time of Lot's removal among them, their cup of impiety was full, and the Lord sunk them by special judgment, amid fire and brimstone, to the bottom of the Dead Sea.

On the other side, where Abram dwelt in Canaan, there was yet a condition of comparative innocence. There was the fear and the worship of God, and the consequent purity of morals, yet prevailing. It was but four or five years from this time that Melchisedek, King of Salem—supposed to be Jerusalem—and a priest of the Most High, blessed Abram, in the manner recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. Sixty or seventy years after this even, a scene transpires which shows that there was remaining something of the fear of God and a reverence for godly men, in that bargain with the sons of Heth, for the cave of Machpelah, which Abram made, and which is given in detail in the record.

It is plain therefore on all sides, that Abram was not exposed to the godless influences which Lot willingly courted. He suffer-

ed from exposure and from famine, but he dwelt among neighbors with whom was the outward and the comparative fear of the Lord, while his nephew suffered his worldliness of mind to draw him into an open snare.

But the question may have arisen: under what particular obligation was Lot to regard religious considerations in a business matter such as this? Was he under any special covenant of righteousness, such as professors of religion assume? and do not men since the world began make bargains without weighing all the considerations in the scales of the Church? Did Lot, in other words, pretend to be a religious man? or did he not, as thousands in our day, cast from him habitually, all special consideration of religious duty? If this were true it would not discharge his obligation nor alter any principle involved in his conduct. It would in fact increase his guilt, since he had been reared in the fear of God.

But the history as given in the Old Testament record leaves us, in truth, in much doubt as to the precise religious character of Lot; and had we nothing further of information, I apprehend that few persons would be inclined to rank him with the saints of the Bible. But the inspired Apostle comes to our aid and testifies unequivocally to his righteousness.

He seems therefore to be the sample of thousands of men in our day, who, professing religion, act like men of the world. Their business is conducted upon worldly principles. They buy and sell, not by Bible rules, but by the rules of the public opinion about them; never in fact asking the question, whether the Bible has any rules which apply to such things. The aim is to be rich, and a wide latitude is given to the moral principles which embrace a good bargain. In making settlement in life, the question is, not how will it affect my religious character and standing; but what will be the prospect of worldly advancement? Can I make money? Can I attain position? Will the chance be good for high association in society?

And yet we must not understand that Lot intended to throw away his religion, and to give up the service of God. Not at all; had this been the case, his whole religious character would have been sacrificed at a stroke, and he would never have obtained mention among the righteous men of the Scriptures.

But the religious life was weak within him; buried down deep in his soul under a superincumbent mass of worldliness, and he made no account of the religious motive in this transaction. He sank, for the time being, his religion out of the account, and made his decision in view of the worldly principles alone. Probably it did not occur to him that his religious life was involved in the matter.

And now having made his choice of position, he separated

himself and his flocks from Abram, and set his face eastward, and worked his way toward the Jordan. "He dwelt in the cities of the plain;" that is, among the cities of the plain, for it is added in the next breath, that he pitched his tent toward Sodom, and if he yet lived in a tent, it is plain that he had not yet taken a house in the city.

The narrative seems to show that his progress toward quitting his pastoral life and becoming a resident in the town was gradual. It would be natural, that, as he drew near to the place, its vile character had begun to reveal itself; and that there had commenced, in the consequence, a struggle in his mind between his conscience and his worldly interests. We may easily see that there would be opposing considerations on either side. The place, as he drew near it, would seem in certain aspects to become attractive as a place of residence, very much as it does to thousands of ambitious and aspiring young men in our day. Doubtless more money was to be made in Sodom than in pasturing cattle upon the intervals adjacent. And if real estate were not so much of an element in the calculation as now, there were chances of traffic and business in a mart of trade such as was Sodom. Doubtless could Lot dispose of his tents and herds to some less wealthy or more rurally disposed person, and invest the proceeds to advantage in the town.

And then how many more comforts he might enjoy. The coarse rusticity of the tent, with its varied exposures, seemed irksome, as he compared it with the luxurious arrangements of a city residence, where furniture and fashion are co-dwellers, and ease and indulgence attend upon riches.

Doubtless, too, all the considerations which spring from these facts were made potent by those who surrounded him. We have fearful intimation afterwards how dear were things like these to his wife, who could not even be torn from them in time to save her life at the final overthrow. And then Lot had daughters, grown or growing, and marriageable; and times were strangely different then and now not only, but human nature also, if these did not seek the city, as proffering alliances more to their mind, than the wandering residence of a tent. We can easily imagine the arguments of these to their father, "That the city was so much more social and elegant," and proffered so many more "chances of improvement" and advancement; that the "horrid tent," with its coarse surroundings of cattle and goats, was not to be named in the comparison.

And so within twenty years, probably within four, Lot was dwelling in Sodom, and his elder daughters were married to the young men of the place. That he saw and felt the uneasiness of his position long before the story thus exhibits him, we can have no doubt. For though *not* a very religious man at the first, as

his bargain with Abram plainly shows, yet the terrible wickedness of such a city as Sodom would impress him as soon as he was brought fairly in contact with it. He would at first think he could bear up against it, and, perhaps, do something to counteract it. Perhaps his family would persuade him that things were not quite so bad as he imagined; that such and such opinions and practices were the fashion, and it was necessary to yield something to the customs about them; that such and such *persons* were very good people; and if they were to live in Sodom, they must do as other people did, else would they be the laughing-stock of the place, and even be hated outright for their singularity.

While these things soothed and half-persuaded Lot, on one side, for a time, the godless uproar battered his ears on the other. Against the vile words which he heard, and the vile sights that met his eyes, he could make no effectual resistance. He could only stick fast to his own integrity, and regret his past indiscretions, and vex his righteous soul with the misdeeds of the terrible sinners about him. Perhaps, indeed, the outrageous wickedness of the town may have stimulated the principles of piety within him; so that Lot himself may have even been a better man than if it had been less violent and uproarious. He felt at least the necessity, the obligation, to brace himself against it, and to keep at least his own soul pure. But this was all he could do. Over his godless neighbors he seems to have had no influence; and even over his own household he had well nigh lost control. All he could do was to save himself, and to contend as well as he could, but doubtfully, for the mastery over the influences of evil which would destroy his family.

Yet God left him not without warning and a chance of early escape. Four years after the separation from Abram, a war broke out between some northern and eastern kings and the kings of the valley, Sodom included; and on a sudden irruption of their forces, Sodom was conquered and the people either driven to the mountains or taken captive. Among the rest, Lot and all his goods were carried away.

Abram, who was so far disgusted with Lot's conduct that he refused to make him his heir, while as yet he had no child of his own, did not refuse his aid on this occasion. He banded his men, and pursued as far as Damascus, and made rescue.

Why not now retrieve the false step he has taken? Why not turn aside to a safer residence, even though less pecuniarily attractive to him, and less socially so to his household? Perhaps he had not yet felt the evils of the place as he did afterwards. Perhaps the love of money, or the social or business connections in which he had become involved, were too strong for his resolution. At all events, the Divine warning was lost upon him, and we hear no more of Lot for fifteen years.

The sacred account which covers this period is occupied with God's appearances, promises, and covenant with Abram, and the trial to which he subjected the faith of that saint, till the hour of judgment and disaster drew on.

II. And this brings us to the results of Lot's bargain. Having chosen the valley of the Jordan, and pitched his tent toward Sodom from mere worldly considerations, how did he prosper? Having driven a good bargain, putting his religion aside, how did he come out? Having gone to live in Sodom to make money; staying there to please and advance his worldly-minded and ambitious family, what was the result? What was it to himself? What was it to his family?

In answer, we see that God had already given him one warning. He had been taken captive, with all his goods, and had only been restored by the valor and fidelity of that uncle with whom his fine bargain had been made. That is, Lot, with his home in the city, and his wealth as the result, was a captive away at Damascus; while Abram, dwelling yet in his tent, living a simple, frugal, godly life, in the more sterile districts of Canaan, was the lord of an army sufficient to pursue and release him. How much had he yet made by his shrewd and selfish bargain?

But this was only after four years of experience. Let us follow him fifteen years further. Of these fifteen years we have no record in the Book of Genesis. We must turn over to the Epistle of Peter, who, speaking of the overthrow of Sodom, says: "God delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. For that righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."

He was not then a happy man after all, in Sodom. He had wealth enough, and outward comforts enough, most likely; perhaps more than he ever expected to have. But it was an awful place to live in; and he felt it so "from day to day;" and its wickedness came very near to him: for as often as any of his children were married they were lost to the Church and to godliness, and went over to the spirit and party, if not to the ways and wickedness, of the Sodomites.

And now, after nineteen years of this sort of trial, comes the catastrophe. Sodom had become a place unfit, not only for Lot, but for any body to dwell in. It had gone past purification even, and like garments worn in the pest-house, was fit only for the fire or the burial. The only thing to be done with it was to sink it between the lightnings of heaven and the fires of an earthquake, and to cover it with a lake of water, so salt, so sulphurous, so sunk between barren hills, and so hot with reflected fires, as that no one can ever again dwell near it; that no vessels shall plow its waves,

no fish be caught in its waters, no bird of any value shall tempt a hunter there ; so desolate that even the Bedouin shall forever shun it ; and that only governmental embassies shall search it out, and reveal it to the world after three thousand five hundred years.

But can not Sodom be saved ? Yes, if fifty righteous persons can be found in it ; yes, if forty ; if thirty ; if twenty ; if ten, it shall stand. Can not Lot hunt out the ten—members of his household, wife, daughters, sons, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law—dependents, all ; can not he muster the ten ? Ah ! the inquest fails. The town must burn : the angels are there, and the fires are ready.

And now watch narrowly and see Lot come out of Sodom. It is in the gray of the morning succeeding a night of uproar and wassail. The sun of last evening went down on a day of buying and selling and building. The night had set in with eating and drinking and swearing, and gay and lewd singing and laughter, and the lights are now but just going out, and the city sleeps after its debauch.

Out of a street in the south-east of the town come forth six persons, with a quickened and retreating step : four of them pale and anxious, and two of them like “the sons of God.” These two hold fast the hands of the four, and hasten them on with sharp authoritative words—and setting them out of the city : “To the mountains, for your lives ; and look not behind you.”

And now the four struggle onward for Zoar, and three reach it. Lot and two daughters are safe in the town. But remember Lot's wife. She could not leave thus the gay delights of Sodom. She had dear daughters there ; her pleasant home was there. No sooner do the angels leave her, than she turns back, to see if somehow she can not regain the treasures of her soul. Poor woman ! The fires burst forth, and the nitrous exhalations envelop her in a moment ; and there she stands, encased in the melted salt, the victim of her idolatrous disobedience. Remember Lot's wife !

And now run over Lot's inventory. His own life; his two daughters ; and the garments upon them. Yonder burns his dwelling. There run wildly about his sons-in-law, convinced too late that he had not “told them idle tales.” There in black consternation died his married daughters. Sons, if he had any, doubtless met their fate in the dens where their sins were. Thence through all the streets and over all the dwellings rolls the sea of smoke and fire, and thence goes it up to heaven, as the smoke of a furnace. Sadly did Abram look out from his place in that early morning, and watch its ascending column, while he murmured : “Not ten righteous in all that city !”

And this is the sum of Lot's success, and the end of that bargain when he pitched his tent toward Sodom, and sought his fortune there.

The main moral of this story is made evident as it proceeds.

It is, that for a righteous man there is no safety, even in the present life, but in abiding fast by the principles of righteousness. To accept the service of God as the rule of life, and then to forget it in its detailed application to specific endeavors, and to take the way of the world instead, is to put the new wine into the old bottles, only to rend them. A man of the world may be suffered to enjoy a present prosperity, and meet his reward in the future ; but the Lord chasteneth his erring children.

But I wish to call attention to several other points as elucidated here.

1. One is that his family, having been without much doubt, if not the cause of his dwelling in Sodom, at least a link that fastened him there, are made to suffer the first weight of the disaster ; and he, having yielded to their influence, is made to suffer through them. His daughters, being allied to the Sons of Baal, their doom comes upon the alliance to curse and to blast it.

2. Another thing to be noticed as here illustrated is, the fatal result of a single false step in early life regarding choice of residence, alliance, or business relations. The person who does not decide these matters in accordance with the obligations of religion, does not decide them in accordance with the truth. He acts upon assumptions based in falsehood ; and falsehood forever has an end in disaster.

Yet how many are there of professors of religion, as Lot was, who decide such questions, as he did, in accordance with mere worldly considerations. How often do young persons, not professors of religion, but piously educated, follow the same track, instead of putting themselves in safe associations, under influences likely to keep them in the ways of outward rectitude, and to bring them to Christ, and into the Church of Christ. The road which you take in the beginning is likely to decide the whole question of your after life. Beware then in what direction your early steps are, for you will find it too late to retrieve them when fully committed to the ways where they have led you.

3. Another matter to be noticed is, the common desire of young persons rurally educated for city life, and the disasters often attending it. Lot's history is essentially re-enacted, in this regard, all over the world, and every decade of years. The young and the ambitious throw themselves into cities, as Lot did, because there is more money, more society, more fashion, more elegance in dress, furniture, and equipage there : yet, regardless of the moral influences with which they come in contact. Now Lot's error was, not in going to Sodom, *per se*. It was, that Sodom, being such a place, and he, knowing its character, went there ; and, being such a place as it was, he staid there. He had no need or necessity of it. He was already rich. His flocks and his herds and tents were a fortune to him ; and he might have been a great

man, living abroad, as Abram did; and brought up his family in purity, and piety, and safety. But even though he had lived in poverty, it would still have been a thousand times better to have shunned the place. He would not have reached a poverty greater than he did, and might have spared the world the humiliation of his example, and of his posterity!

The sin of others is, not of a certainty that they dwell in a city—though this may be their sin—but that dwelling there, they put themselves under corrupting influences, form godless alliances, seek to make money as their end, or to gain station, as if this were the chief good of life.

But Lot's example teaches, that, even so long ago as he lived, city property is not always safe; but that it is neither safe nor valuable unless there be virtue and the fear of God in the community. Vice must be under restraint, if possessions are to be desirable. No man truly wise, be he godly or not, will buy real estate in Sodom. For if the aim be to put it to good uses, the sins of the city defeat the end; and if you go with the Sodomites in their ways of sin, to make your property available, you run the risk of their impiety. See, in the case before us, how great they are!

Godliness is profitable for the life that now is. So Lot found it by inverse experience; but that it be so profitable, it is necessary that it have sway in the community, as well as in the individual soul. Pearls before swine do not enrich, but impoverish, the giver.

We conclude with one more observation. Our narrative does not bring it directly into view, but it is closely connected with the escape of Lot from Sodom.

It is said that in delivering Lot, God remembered Abram, and granted the delivery for *his* sake. You will remember too, that it was the prayer of Abram, not of Lot, on which hung the destiny of the place, on the existence within it of ten righteous souls. Yes, but for Abram, God would have saved Lot's soul, but not his body. He would have burned with the Sodomites!

Let worldly men, and worldly professors too, remember, in the light of this example, how many of their deliverances, yes, of all their blessings, they owe to the righteous with whom they are associated; and if a decided piety in the sight of God is so valuable, why is it not worth their own attainment?

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